

for.

And so, in conclusion, let me say this: This is the year of change, change, change. The election will all be about change because change really is the natural condition of our land. This isn't something new. I believe that now we've changed the world, we are poised and ready to change America, to make America even better. But we must keep something important in mind. Now that our moral values are victorious around the globe, we cannot and we will not abandon them at home.

We didn't stand together to see courageous moral values rise in Russia only to be ignored here at home. We did not sacrifice so that personal responsibility could triumph in totalitarian regimes, only to become passé here in this great Nation.

It's time to get back to some basic American values. So I am going to defend the principles for which you stand so firm. We will keep our sights on what's good in America. We will keep our focus on the potential in our families and, most of all, in our young

people, in our kids. We'll keep a reliable compass. We'll put our ship of state in finest sailing trim, and as this Nation has so many times before, we will sail on to shining new horizons.

Thank you. May God bless you and our beloved country, the United States of America. Thank you very much.

Note: The President spoke at 11:04 a.m. at the Marriott Marquis Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Virgil C. Dechant, Supreme Knight, Knights of Columbus; John Cardinal O'Connor, Archbishop of New York; William Cardinal Baum, Patrimony of the Holy See; Edouard Cardinal Gagnon, president, Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses; Thomas Daily, Bishop of Brooklyn; Archbishop Agostino Cacciavillan, Papal Nuncio; Mother Teresa of Calcutta, founder and superior of the Missionaries of Charity; Dan Rather, CBS News; and Anthony Cardinal Bevilacqua, Archbishop of Philadelphia.

Remarks to the Disabled American Veterans National Convention in Reno, Nevada

August 5, 1992

Let me tell you that it is a great pleasure to renew old ties, greet new friends. And of course, I want to thank Cleveland Jordan for the introduction. He said he persuaded me to come. This man's tough; you get the arm up behind the back, twist the elbow here, and here I am. And I am very, very pleased. Sorry that I missed the other one, but delighted to be at your side and congratulate you on your service to this wonderful national organization.

Butch Joeckel greeted me earlier, the national adjutant; Jesse Brown, the national executive director of the DAV. And of course, I want to single out and salute a man who's helped me enormously, Ed Derwinski, our Secretary of Veterans Affairs. And may I also mention Robin Higgins. Cleve most appropriately mentioned Colonel Higgins, and I want to salute her

here. And thanks to all of you who represent America's disabled veterans, their families, their survivors; they're fully 1.4 million strong.

I was just asking Joe about the vintage of some of you all. And I must say, looking out at the audience, and I don't want to put everybody in this category, a lot come out of the same war that I was in. And I don't want to say that you're old guys or women, but nevertheless—[laughter]—you kind of make me feel at home here. So I'll leave it there.

But I also want to bring you best wishes from a great friend and fan of yours named Barbara. She and I were talking about coolness under fire. I told her, the more I'm criticized, the more I turn it into humor. You know her; she said, "The rate you're going, you'll soon be funnier than Johnny

Carson.” [Laughter]

Last September, I was very honored to be with many here, but honored to attend your salute to the Persian Gulf veterans. Today, I’m proud to salute the American veteran. The American vet deserves safe streets, a sound economy, strong families, a world at peace. You believe, and I agree, America should serve those who served their country.

That’s why my administration has not wavered in our commitment to you and your families. We must change our health care system in this Nation, and we will. But let me be clear: We will not change our commitment to the integrity of veterans health care. No program is going to change that.

If, in all this talk about change, Congress sends me legislation to dismantle the VA system, I will whip out my veto pen and knock down that Scud missile, that Scud missile that’s aimed right at your very well-being. If you ask how many VA hospitals I’ll close, I’ll say not three, not two, not one. If anyone again suggests taxing your benefits, I’ll say what I have said before: Don’t take it from our veterans.

Now, I know you’re concerned about having your voice heard as the Washington bureaucracy debates your health care future. So just yesterday I created a special panel there in the White House to guarantee your leadership’s involvement. We will listen, and we will act to stand by those who stood up for America.

I am very proud of the progress that we’ve made together. Your leadership has sensitized all of us, brought the problems to us, worked cooperatively when there were difficulties. I can’t tell you how much cooperation we’ve had. But they’ve never held back, saying we must do this, we must do that. They’ve been strong leaders.

We have created specialized centers. We funded new outpatient clinics and moved more resources into VA medical care, too. I also am proud of how we have built on these beginnings. Two years ago we passed the Americans with Disabilities Act. That is the most sweeping civil rights legislation since the sixties. And it will help the disabled enter the mainstream, and it’s just about time that this country did that.

Three years ago, as Cleve mentioned, I

was on my way to address this convention, your convention. You know what changed my plans. It concerned a husband, a father, an American hero. And again, with us today is the wife of Colonel Rich Higgins, Major Robin Higgins. On behalf of every American, let me just once again tell you I admire your courage from the bottom of my heart. We all do. We’re very, very grateful to you.

Two years ago this week, I made a decision that I think every Commander in Chief, every President, dreads having to make: to send our men and women in the Armed Forces into harm’s way. This one was at the beginning of Operation Desert Shield. No President, no father, no parent makes that decision lightly. But I acted because America must stand for freedom, and we must stand by those who preserve it.

I don’t want to start telling war stories here because then I’d have to listen to you guys. [Laughter] And I don’t have time. But let me tell you this: From my own experience, I learned firsthand what it means to know that America will never abandon its fighting men, whatever their fate. My family never had to face the agony of a phone call in the night or a knock on the door. Let me say to the families waiting still for their loved ones: We will not forget you.

I am pleased that the League of Families last week strongly supported our administration’s efforts and commended my administration’s programs. But though dramatic progress has been made, all are not accounted for. I will fight to make sure that America stands with you, the veterans, until the fate of every POW and MIA is known.

Over the last 3½ years, America’s heroes have helped a war crumble in Berlin; from Kuwait to Panama, helped free those once enslaved. Our soldiers were not wounded in vain. You helped end the cold war. Those who served at whatever time in recent history helped end the cold war. And America won the cold war.

Having won, we worked with the republics of the former Soviet Union to reduce strategic nuclear arms. But President Yeltsin and I have agreed to go even further. You may remember my meeting with him a couple of months ago. We agreed to eliminate the most destabilizing of all those terri-

ble multiwarheaded ICBM's, those great big—in their case, those SS-18's that have cast fear into the hearts of everybody. By that agreement we have reduced the threat of nuclear war. This is something that every family in America, every child in America is grateful for.

Let me make another point about that. Our victory in the cold war means that our defenses can be smaller. And so earlier this year, based on the recommendations, and I emphasize this point, based on the recommendations of Secretary Cheney and our distinguished Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Colin Powell, I made some responsible cuts. I responsibly cut our long-range defense budget. But we cannot lose sight of the fact that for all the great gains that we have made for freedom, for all the peace of mind that we have secured for our children, the world remains a dangerous place.

The Soviet bear may be extinct, but there are still plenty of wolves in the world, renegade rulers, terrorists, outlaw regimes, Baghdad bullies. And as long as I am President I will not allow a madman to get a finger on the nuclear trigger. We will stay strong as the United States.

You know, today some have forgotten every hard-won lesson of this American century. I know you haven't. So some propose to cut our national defense, to cut \$60 billion in defense beyond what our military experts deem responsible for the national security of this country.

Well, let me answer them: Yes, I know this is a political year. But the defense budget is more than a piggy bank for people who want to get busy beating swords into pork barrels, and we are not going to have that. I owe it to you, the veterans of this country, to be able to certify to you that we are keeping our national security at proper levels.

I know this fundamental truism, that to keep America safe, we have to keep America strong. That's why when the other side says "Let's ravage the Strategic Defense Initiative," I say, "Remember the lesson of Desert Storm." We will not leave the world defenseless against nuclear attacks. We will push forward with SDI.

Think for a moment about what a strong America has helped achieve. Think about

the worries we once faced and the world we see today: not a Europe in flames, not a world at war, touched off by the death throes of the Soviet empire, but a world at peace, a new birth of freedom; not a Latin America consumed by revolution and resentment that has plagued that area for so long but a hemisphere moving toward free trade and free government; not a Middle East dominated by a dictator but a region where ancient enemies at long last are talking peace, sitting across from each other at the peace table, something that people thought was impossible to bring about. Our policies and your backing help make all of this possible.

So when the Sunday strategists say that I've spent too much time on foreign policy, let me just put it this way: I will never apologize for a single minute spent keeping America strong, safe, and free.

Well, where do we go next? Well, I think about our challenges. When I do that I'm reminded of a football story, a football story, a story about a freshman football player thrust into a close game, the close of a tie game, late there in the fourth quarter, with the ball on his own team's one-yard line. And the coach grabbed the quarterback and he said, "Don't take any chances. Just fall on the ball three times and then punt." Well, on the first snap, a huge hole opened up in the line and the quarterback scrambled all the way to the 50. The next snap, another huge hole, and down to the 25 he went. On the third play, the quarterback ran through an opening wider than the River Nile and fell just one yard short of a touchdown. The crowd was going crazy, screaming for victory, and the freshman took the fourth snap, stepped back, calmly punted the ball completely out of the stadium. [Laughter] And on the sideline the coach was tearing his hair out. He ran onto the field screaming. "What could you possibly be thinking?" And the freshman replied, "I was just thinking, you must be the dumbest coach in the entire world." [Laughter]

As the coach of the American foreign policy, or foreign policy coach, it would be the height of stupidity for me to suggest that we just ignore our foreign commit-

ments, as some suggest now. And by the way, I'm tempted to say that now the world playing field is so competitive, I'm not sure we should trust to a team a rookie quarterback. But that's something else again. [Laughter]

Now, my point is, we can't punt out foreign concerns. We have important work to do. First we must do all we can to bolster the process of democracy, especially where democratic friends have replaced totalitarian enemies in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union. I hope you will stand with me and urge Congress to act immediately to approve this "FREEDOM Support Act," to lend a helping hand to the former Soviet Union, take out an insurance policy on democracy. After World War I, we ignored the summons for help, and we paid dearly. We paid dearly for that. After World War II, we lent a helping hand, and our lives are richer for it. So let us not ignore the lesson of history. Let us act now to support freedom and free enterprise.

Our second challenge is not to turn our back on the world economy. Seventy percent of our economic growth the last 4 years has come from exports; 7.2 million American jobs are tied to trade. I will work to open foreign markets, to strengthen our schools so that we can compete, because what is true today will be true tomorrow: Give an American worker the chance, and he will beat the pants off of the competition.

Over the past 3½ years, America has changed the world, just as we're now ready to change America, building the kind of nation here many of you fought so valiantly for abroad.

Think of what you fought for, an America of better jobs and better schools and safer neighborhoods and equality for all, a land where our kids and grandkids would live in prosperity and peace. Think of what we can now achieve, an America which eclipses even its greatest triumphs. But I need your help.

Landing here in Reno this afternoon and being greeted by our very able Lieutenant Governor, Sue Wagner, who's here with us right now, I had an incredible treat. I was met by a Nevadan, a guy from Carson City named J.C. Crume, who has joined me here at the convention today. I think he's here;

he was trying to get on in. I met him—this is a little history—50 years ago, 1942. I was 18 years old. He was my first flight instructor at the naval air station there in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He took this scared 18-year-old kid and put me behind the stick of a Navy plane. And J.C.'s hair looked a little gray, but he told me that it wasn't age. It's the lingering effects of the terror he felt 50 years ago with this young kid sitting in the back seat. [Laughter] And very frank and honest guy that he is.

But more seriously, I did learn something from him and from my other soul mates and comrades in arms in the Navy. I learned about teamwork, and I learned about the importance of sticking together from Mr. Crume and all the other guys in the Navy. I learned to depend on my wingman for friendship, for support, and even for survival.

As you know, some of you may know this history, but after I left basic training, J.C.'s great instruction, I was assigned to the Pacific. One day, my plane was shot down, TBF flying over the island of Chi Chi Jima, just off the island, and parachuted into the water. When I was swimming in the middle of the Pacific, one of my wingmen pointed me to a liferaft that had fallen from the plane, while another wingman then helped keep the enemy at bay. They put boats out from this island of Chi Chi Jima.

After the Navy, I didn't wear my uniform every day, but believe me, friends have been part of every good fortune in my life, every good fortune. Now I'm about to embark on another political battle, and I know this is a nonpolitical convention, but I would be remiss if I did not express my thanks to those who have helped here and to those, regardless of party, who have done so much to strengthen, whatever our politics, strengthen support for the American veteran.

And I am saying, some things transcend politics. And I'm just saying to all of you, let's stay together. Let's stay together. Let's not the wingman peel off as we fight for the proper recognition of and support for the American veteran.

Thank you all very, very much. And may

God bless the United States of America.

Note: The President spoke at 5:02 p.m. in the Goldwyn Ballroom at the Reno Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Cleveland Jordan, national commander, DAV; Jo-

seph C. Zengerle, national senior vice commander, DAV; and Maj. Robin Higgins, whose husband, Col. William R. Higgins, was killed while held hostage in Beirut, Lebanon.

Remarks to the American Legislative Exchange Council in Colorado Springs, Colorado

August 6, 1992

Thank you for that wonderfully warm ALEC welcome. And Fred Noye, thank you for that generous introduction. I want to thank the official host, the Mayor, Mayor Isaac, for his hospitality; recognize Sam Brunelli, of course, an old friend with us here who feels very comfortable here; Holly Coors, so well-known to all in ALEC; my dear friend and respected leader of faith, Jim Dobson here. Let me just say, Fred, you have done a wonderful job as chairman. I'm not pronouncing you dead yet; you have a few more months. But you've done a great chairman job. And I know that your shoes will be ably filled by Bill Raggio, over here, from the State of Nevada.

Bill flew in with us last night from Reno on Air Force One. And all the White House stationery and matchboxes from the plane are missing. But he swears there's no correlation whatsoever. *[Laughter]* But I was so honored that he came all the way up from the convention, took the puddle-jumpers all the way, to just represent ALEC on the ride down, fill me in on what a fantastic convention is underway right here in Colorado Springs.

Twenty years ago, when ALEC started, I see it that you were a lone voice in the conservative wilderness. Now you gather in these marvelous Colorado mountains at a time when the endangered species list is topped by that creature rarely spotted outside of the 202 area code; I'm talking, of course, about the unabashed, unreconstructed liberal. *[Laughter]*

But your energy and your ideas and your enthusiasm helped lead the ideological transformation of America. So it's an honor

to be standing here as your guest, invited to speak to you today. I understand that, I think the figure is no fewer than six members of my Cabinet will speak here. I'm especially delighted that you've chosen to give the Thomas Jefferson Freedom Award, that coveted award, to the idea man of the conservative movement, Jack Kemp.

As you know, so far this election has been a little one-sided. For 9 months—and I'm not complaining; my day is coming—for 9 months, five other candidates, maybe it was six way back then, various sundry surrogates have aimed a firehose of criticism at me. I have been blamed for everything except that crazy scoring system that was used in the Olympic boxing competition. I shouldn't really go out on a limb like that because I haven't checked the AP wire and see how it went. *[Laughter]*

But I admit I've been a little slow to fight back. My opponent has mentioned my name about once every 5 seconds, not always in the most flattering light. I still haven't even said his name in full. I've referred occasionally to "my opponent," "the other guy," and even "the Governor of a certain State with a profitable chicken industry on the Mississippi River, located somewhere between Texas and Oklahoma." *[Laughter]*

Let me tell you why I have waited. As I listen to the American people, I get a sense of something you might pick up from your own constituents. People are sick of politics. I think they think this election year has gone on a little too long. You used to start on Labor Day. Labor Day isn't even at hand yet. They're tired of the charges and